

critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.
NU 2-0325 Y. M. KRAUS

Oct 6, 1954 Vol VII No 4 \$10 year The Weekly New York City Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Week

Reclining Figure-Lyceum 10/7. Martin Gabel. Henry Margolies present a new comedy by Harry Kurnitz adapted from his own novel about the discovery of a lost Renoir. Martin Gabel, Mike Wallace, Percy Waram, Georgann Johnson in cast directed by Abe Burrows...Noah-Broadway Tabernacle 10/10 Broadway Chapel Players present Andre Obey's play with Robinson Stone, Ruth White for ten Sundays through Dec 13 at 5 PM...On Your Toes-46th St 10/11- George Abbott presents revival of Rodgers-Hart-Abbott musical comedy with Vera Zorina, Bobby Van, Elaine Stritch...Fragile Fox-Belasco-10/12. Paul Vroom & Bernard Strauss present new play by Norman Brooks about the Battle of the Bulge in War II with Dane Clark, Don Taylor, staged by Herbert Bayard Swope, Jr...Tender Trap-Longacre 10/13. Clinton Wilder presents a new comedy by Max Shulman & Robert Paul Smith about a man-about-town with Robert Preston, Kim Hunter, Ronnie Graham, staged by Michael Gordon...Sing Me No Lullaby-Phoenix 10/14. Norris Houghton & T. Edward Hambleton present new play by Robert Ardrey with Richard Kiley, Beatrice Straight, Jessie Royce Landis. Staged by Paul Stewart.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Boy Friend- Royale- 9/30. 100% unanimous approval of English musical which spoofs 1920 brand of musicals. Entire company shared praise. Books, lyrics and music by Sandy Wilson and English-American cast headed by Julie Andrews, Bob Scherer, John Hower were termed just perfect. Direction by Vida Hope was also credited with aiding show, though Times reviewer noted intermural rumpus made it hard to tell who deserved credit for brisk staging. Costumes and sets by Reginald Woolley were cheered by all. Some had slight criticism that full evening of burlesque of 1920 musical may be too much for some, but not for the daily critics. Atkinson, Times, joined several others who almost believed the story and almost found it moving. Kerr, Herald Tribune, hopes someone 30 years from now will be as nice to our musical comedies. Happy, aimable, funny show, adds Chapman, News. Taken on its own terms, Coleman, Mirror, thinks fan will have a nostalgic, fun evening. Skillful blend of spoof and sentiment, notes McClain, Journal American. Star of evening was the four girl chorus of harum-scarum finishing school girls, commented Hawkins, World Telegram-Sun. Author states show is not satire, but "pastiche", an effort to capture the authentic quality of the period. Either way most NY daily critics listed it as season's first hit.

The Way of the World-Cherry Lane 9/29.- Revival of Congreve's Restoration play for first time in 50 years in NY was greeted by Times, Herald Tribune, Mirror, Post, World Telegram & Sun, Eagle critics. Proscenium Productions play was recommended by all, though there was differences of opinion on the quality of the performances. Physical production-sets and costumes by Don Crawford was highly praised by all as a splendid job on a tiny stage. Warren Enters direction was also applauded. Nancy Wickwire as the malicious coquette was tabbed the best by most, others okayed include Gerry Fleming, Jack Fletcher and Thayer David. Kerr, Herald Tribune, also recommended it to casting agents as a must. Critics also agreed complicated plot was best forgotten. The brilliance of Congreve's wit comes through more often than you would expect, adds Hawkins, WT&S. A Worthy and heroic try to a famous and difficult play, sums up Watts, Post.

' Off Broadway '

Invitation Theatre's production of The Glass Menagerie opens for 3 nights at Amato Theatre Oct 12 featuring Viola Swayne...Ludwig Donath stars in Dybbuk opening Oct 25 at Fourth St. Theatre... Bert Freed has replaced Terry Becker as director of A Stone for Danny Fisher opening Oct 21 at Downtown National Theatre. ...Nice to Visit, a new revue, will be presented at any Off Broadway house this season by Woody Parker and Jean Meegan ...Lilyan Wilder and John Conrad joined the cast of Broadway Chapel Players Noah ...Slightly Delinquent production opens Blackfriars 14th Season Oct 25...Green Room Studio production of Beyond the Horizon moved to Oct 22...In Splendid Error opens 8 week run at Greenwich Mews Oct 18

' Tryout Calendar '

Pre Broadway runs this week include: BOSTON- Tender Trap, Fanny, DETROIT-Mrs. Patterson, LOS ANGELES-Peter Pan New Haven-On Your Toes, Philadelphia-Fragile Fox.

' West Coast '

Stage, Inc., new legit group headed by Richard Boone will present Peer Gynt Oct 21-22 at Royce Hall, UCLA with James Whitmore, Warren Stevens, Alex Nicol...Sands of Negev will open at Civic Playhouse, LA, Nov 2, 2 weeks after NY opening.

What Every Woman Knows debut with Helen Hayes at Huntington Hartford's new theatre is given a fine production, rates Scho, Variety, who tabbed house the most striking legit showplace in the US.

' Vaudeville '

New Palace show headed by Tony Drake, Frankie Marlowe, Don Sinclair, Slim Timblin.

' Theatre Record Comments '

Three Penny Opera cast album made by MGM features Lotte Lenya and rest of cast which revived work last season at Theatre De Lys. Briggs, Times, enjoyed album and especially Miss Lenya's striking performance. She uses her limited voice to achieve effects which are odd, striking and by no means displeasing.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, RCA Victor album of Old Vic production seems a heavy handed performance to Times reviewer who thought the verses recited in flat conversational tones move slowly.

' Theatre TV Comments '

Lady in the Dark NBC TV production by Max Leibman and starring Ann Sothern was generally lauded by the TV critics. A remarkable blend of play, color embellishment and time-outs for sponsor, okayed Adams, Times. TV show was real theatre, it had vitality, mood and illusion from start to finish Times man concluded...A thing of surpassing splendor with all departments turning in impressive performances, added Van Horne, World Telegram & Sun...

On the con side O Brian, Journal American thought story via TV lacked proper elements and that Sothern played Maizie more than Liza....Rosen, Variety, also felt TV show failed to establish the necessary mood.

' Changes in Chart '

SHOWS THAT CLOSED- Cretan Woman, Major Barbara Pony Cart, Hayride.

ADD OFF BROADWAY- Way of World at Cherry Lane, Clanestine Marriage at Provincetown.

THEATRE CHANGES- By the Beautiful Sea to Imperia, King of Hearts to National.

' Green Room Department '

PAPERED HOUSES...Discreet papering of a house is urged, when needed, by "Stage" editorial for both the sake of the player and the patron. British trade paper believes patron who buys a high priced seat to a show nearing end of run feels better if other seats are occupied. Also, English paper notes, the invited audience who conveniently fill in ugly gaps often take more trouble over their appearance than the paying patrons. While the player deserves the fullest possible house if he is to do justice to the author's lines and to his own skill. Because in the theatre nothing succeeds like success, paper concludes, why not create the illusion of success in the house in the hope of improving future business.

COLUMN TIPS...Glenda Farrell may hand in her notice to Home Is The Hero because she didn't get star billing, hears Winchell...Congressional probers will return to NY to check into Red influences in the American theatre, reports Lyons.

LYTELL OBITS...Surely one of the best-liked actors of two generations, a useful and respected member of the show biz family, sums up Variety editorial on Bert Lytell...He made his tenure of office as Actors Equity president notable, adds Sobol, Journal American, by his vigilant battle against encroaching Communism in the Theatre.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...The 1920's attracts attention rather than other decades because that is the period when America said goodbye to its youth and started on its maturity, explains Sheaffer, Eagle...Loretta Leversee, who gave a delightful performance in Bullfight last season is a find, points out Watts, Post...George Jean Nathan, Journal American, admits he skipped Hayride because he felt critics had no more place there than the show itself. And, he adds, it was raining.

BORGE FIRST YEAR...McHarry, News, skipped second act of The Boy Friend and wandered next door to Golden to year Victor Borge, which he is sure he enjoyed more than full blown musical...Coleman, Mirror, reminds that Borge Comedy in Music actually employs a dozen theatre workers, backstage and in front of the curtain...Chapman, News, lists the 12 as 7 idle stage musicians, 5 idle stage hands, 1 press agent, and 1 peedle.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Off Broadway plays should be something more than watered-down Broadway, Warren Enters, a co-producer of Proscenium Productions told Herridge, Post. The group now presenting Way of the World also wants to show people other styles of acting rather than The Method.

' Pros & Cons by TMK '

Way of the World is of interest to the serious drama student who has never seen the Congreve comedy of manners. The ability of the cast ranges from very, very good to very poor. While several get the full humor and fun out of the stylized acting, others have so much trouble recalling the long speeches, that acting is forgotten. Sets and costumes in tiny Cherry Lane are superb and help brighten a good college try.

The Boy Friend is a well done, if slightly padded, full blown spoof of the types of musicals seen on the stage in the 1920's, and to some extent still viewed on films and TV. English cast members are a different and talented breed than US fans see. While the music and lyrics are so familiar they are bound to be hits. The producers are to be congratulated for realizing US theatre fans would go for this different kind of fun.

ANTA is aiding the US State Department plan tours of American shows and entertainers abroad in a plan to counteract Russian propaganda. Mrs. H Innes Brown, president of Greater NY Chapter of ANTA has been named coordinator of the Performing Arts International Exchange Program. Private funds will be sought to underwrite each tour.

Plays - .

Hayride closed...King of Hearts moved to National, By the Beautiful Sea moved to Imperial...Fifth Season closes Oct 23 and will play Washington, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh...Abie's Irish Rose may be revived by Abie's Irish Rose at his Holiday Theatre... Bad Seed will be directed by Reginald Denham...Pleasure Dome, anew revue, will be produced by Jack Segasture .

People

Bert Lytell, died at age 69...Nat Karson, stage and TV producer, died at age 46 ...Rita Morley replaces Neva Patterson in Seven Year Itch Oct 11...Joan Fontaine was out of Tda and Sympathy due to grippe for 1 performance, Mary Fickett subbed ...Robert Fleming will play opposite Jennifer Jones in Portrait of a Lady...Feud between Sandy Wilson and Vida Hope and American producers Ernest Martin and Cy Feuer over The Boy Friend settled after opening .

Other Broadways

Minneapolis Lyceum Theatre interim stock policy has been dropped due to lack of business, despite good press approval. Theatre Guild will present six shows this season at theatre and stock company plan was to be tried between road shows.

Theatre Record Notes

House of Flowers, original cast album will be made by Columbia...RCA Victor will record original cast albums of The Boy Friend, Fanny and Silk Stockings this season.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Lend An Ear will be presented on CBS TV in color Oct 28 with Edgar Bergen, Sher-ee North and Gene Nelson...CBS TV Morning Show presents tickets to hits to members of studio audience, asking them to come back the next day to "review" show they saw. ...Theatre TV of Seven Year Itch, originally announced for this year, depends on the release date decided upon the 20th Century Fox film of same.

CRITICAL DIGEST
505-Fifth Ave, NYC

First Class Mail

